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INDIVIDUAL EXERTION:

A

Christmas Call to Action.

BY ELLEN BARLEE,

AUTHORESS OF "OUR HOMELESS POOR," ETC., ETC.

"MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK."



L O N D O N :

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY EMILY FAITHFULL & CO.,

Victoria Press, (for the Employment of Women,)

GREAT CORAM STREET, W.C.

1861.

“ Nor did he wait till to his door the voice
Of supplication came ; but went abroad,
With foot as silent as the starry dews,
In search of misery that pined unseen,
And would not ask.

“ Oh, who can tell what sights he saw
Of wretchedness, or who describe what smiles
Of gratitude illumed the face of woe,
While from his hand he gave the bounty forth.”

POLLOCK.

INDIVIDUAL EXERTION.

NOT long since there appeared in a new leading magazine a well-written article of deep interest, entitled, "What the Rich are doing for the Poor." *

Marvellously numerous are the institutions, societies, and associations of every description that the writer proved are at work for the benefit of the needy, and almost incredible the sums of money yearly subscribed by private individuals towards their support. In fact, so munificent appears the generosity of "the rich," that one would almost imagine the poor must either soon cease from the land, or that at least, with such a network of asylums, all misery would rapidly find alleviation.

"Happy England," as a reader of the magazine exclaimed, "'with a little management' one might be born, educated, housed, sick, cured, live, die, and be buried by public charity!"

Nor was the observation unfounded; for if the list of these public charities be closely scanned, there is scarcely an ill to which flesh is heir, or a want of humanity, physical, educational, or intellectual, that has not its remedial aid in some charitable institution. England's liberality in this respect can never be questioned; and not only at home, but

* The *St. James's Magazine*, May, 1861.

abroad, far and near, wherever misfortune is found to visit the globe, there the philanthropy and benevolence of England's sons and daughters are recognised with surprise and admiration. Thank God that such is the case, that the power and the will to give bountifully go hand in hand. This is, doubtless, good.

We would not for a moment depreciate a nationality of which we may be justly proud, but is there not another side, however, to the picture—another view which may be taken of the public institutions we raise to provide *for our people's need*?

The sum of money yearly expended on the charities of London, including those on the foundations and public benefactions, amount to above two millions of pounds. Deducing from the above such charities as have been established to meet the improvement of life, morals, and disease, we find—

Medical Charities	£266,925
Morals	35,717
Reclaiming the Fallen	18,387
Miscellaneous Charities	10,000
Provident Ditto	9,000
Blind, Deaf, and Dumb	87,063
Orphans	88,228
Pension Societies	23,667
Spent yearly on Poor Rates	614,000

Might not this question then arise, "If England be the happy, flourishing, prosperous country we boast of, why have

we such an amount of wretchedness, disease, and crime, to provide for?"

In our physical organization, for the enjoyment of life and happiness it is necessary that an even flow of health should pervade the entire system, for "if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." Does not the same rule hold good in the constitution of a country? and if so, is there not some defect in an organization which reduces so large a portion of its members to depend on public charity for support and protection?

The problem involved is a difficult one, requiring thought, experience, and courage, to propound.

We trust we shall not be accused of presumption if, in all humility, we venture to offer one or two suggestions, gathered from a practical acquaintance with the class whose miseries help to fill our public institutions.

We would not, however, at the outset be mistaken, or lead the public to imagine that we think there is at present one charity or one association that can be spared from our land. On the contrary, we believe, under the present state of society, not only is there an imperative call for such a machinery, but, as years roll on, institutions will have to be doubled, in order to keep pace with the necessities that disease and poverty create.

We would confine our remarks especially to the metropolis, where in almost every street some finger-post of public benevolence is to be found.

Does the amount of subscribed charity, we ask, bear

a proportionate benefit on the social improvement of the poor? or, large as the amount seems, is it not a fair tithe of what God requires from us?

Let those philanthropists reply who, not content solely with "*giving*," are spending time and strength in their endeavours to ameliorate the condition of the lower classes.

They tell us "that, notwithstanding all the rich do for the poor," there is yet such a fearful amount of unaided destitution that the heart sickens in the attempt to provide any permanent relief.

The practical experience of one and all thus engaged varies little in its result—viz., that the moral atmosphere of the poor is one that breeds the maladies, mental and physical, that we open our asylums to cure. Is it not, then, possible that Benevolence may be working in a one-sided direction? Would it not, at any rate, be wiser to spend a larger portion of her capital in modest prevention than allow neglect, first, to undermine the building and then seek to repair by public subscription the ruins she has made.

The legitimate asylums for age, sickness, and infirmities, &c., Christians will never allow to fail for want of support. The institutions also opened to meet the spiritual, intellectual, and educational requirements of the age, must and will increase with the advance of civilization. It is the societies we are necessitated to erect in behalf of our destitute, our incurables, our criminals, that we hold to be an anomaly on England's national prosperity. These are the institutions, then, we would attack, and that, not by diminishing their

numbers, but by bringing other influences to bear in undermining the need of their existence.

We believe the great mistake made in the distribution of Charity is, that we have grown apathetic and indolent; we trust too much to our gold to do the work of reformation, ignoring in our luxurious ease the weightier question of *individual exertion*.

As long as liberality is confined to the purse, and *a few* individuals are made the almoners of a charitable public, so long destitution will increase, and that from the utter inability to detect deception or exercise personal influence. A stronger power than gold requires to be at work to stem the torrent of misery around us, and every recruit who joins the ranks, already engaged in individual exertion, does more for the cause of humanity than money can purchase.

To this want of individual exertion we attribute more than half of the physical misery we open our hospital doors to assuage.

To want of individual exertion we trace the downfall into crime of by far the larger portion of those who fill our reformatories and penitentiaries.

From want of individual exertion our unions are crowded to overflowing; our poor exist by thousands in misery, and die unnatural and lingering deaths. We put forth this statement from a conviction of its truth. We do not hesitate to assert, that among the hundreds of aggravated cases of distress that come beneath our notice, we believe that the greater portion of them might have been averted, had

there been a connecting link of protection between the rich and the poor.

Human nature in its happiest state requires encouraging and uplifting, or its natural tendency is to fall into apathy and carelessness. Let educated minds be seen to mix among ignorant ones, and marvellous is it to observe how the weaker will gather round the strong, and their evil tendencies be kept in abeyance by love, approbation, interest, or fear.

Inaction and luxury have, however, established such a barrier between the two classes, that influence lies dormant till neglect has done its work, and its victims knock at the doors of our institutions for admittance; we then make a virtue of necessity, and while we deprecate, preach, and condemn, extend tardily, under the name of *charity*, the protection that should have previously been theirs by the rights of Christianity.

It is the first shadow of misfortune that, unaided, unassisted, and unadvised, beckons misery forward and *pauperizes our poor*. Unknowing and unknown, with none to uphold them, numberless are the human beings who find it easier to drown want in vice and plenty than to fight alone the battle of need with unrecognised honesty as their only weapon.

The great drawback, we are, however, continually told, between a more intimate relation of the two classes consists in the distance they live from one another, the want of time for supervision and inquiry, and the depressing effects

of contact with want or, again, the fear of infection. Are these difficulties, however, insuperable? and can they be weighed against the calls of humanity or the individual responsibilities to which God has called us all?

Let Christians but take a perspective glance at the quick descent from misery to crime, with its consequences *here* and *hereafter*, and will there not be many who will set aside these inconveniences and haste to the rescue?

To ladies we especially address ourselves, because the undue proportion of destitution that falls on the female sex, from their surplus of numbers, calls especially for their intervention. We are convinced that many ladies who are living in the enjoyment of wealth, health, and happiness, would not restrain their efforts in the cause had they the faintest conception of the wretched condition of the working women of London.

No words can express their need of protection; no language we hold can be too strong to call forth exertion in their behalf.

What moral atmosphere can that be in which existence is a misfortune? what the civilization which condemns a large portion of women to live on three or four shillings a week, under an artificial price of provisions, and a forced rental of at least two shillings of that sum for the roof that covers them? Truly, we are told continually "they have the alternative of the union." But if our aim be to raise the moral and social condition of the poor, do we carry it out by compelling them to enlist in the ranks of pauperism a remedy which

divests them of every external means of independence and makes no distinction between honest misfortune and the destitution engendered by intemperance and vice?

The writer labours among the most respectable of these needy ones, yet she can tell of widows with young children struggling with gaunt famine (dividing, as she has known too often, a penny roll among four children for their entire day's food)—Of emaciation and pain unchecked, preparing their victims for our hospitals—Of women lying on bare boards during frost and snow, without covering or fire—Of children born to deserted wives, without any means to provide for their advent—Of individuals of all ages in every stage of misery and despair: yet such is the innate sense these people have of the injustice that makes no classification for respectable poverty, no provision for willing industry, that they will endure to the last extremity of want sooner than subject themselves to the associations and debasing companionship of union protection. When every power is crushed, and hope is extinct, then only the respectable poor seek that asylum, and, alas! put on the garment of pauperism, seldom to put it off again. God knows how much of this distress might be spared if the rich were but cognizant of their previous struggles for independence. At any rate, the appreciation of an evil ought to be suggestive of some steps towards its reform, and we hold that the great object of personal exertion should be "*to prevent our poor becoming paupers.*" Self-respect is the life of independence, and the knell which rings out its existence is the jarring sound of the union door. Now,

if every family in easy circumstances in London would but make it a matter of conscience to extend their personal influence over but one family from the industrial classes, would not one half or more of the unnatural state of destitution we lament be swept away? In every house there are scraps and crumbs to give which would otherwise be wasted by servants; there is work or charring to be done; and these, added to the usual means of industrial subsistence, would help to balance the scale of independence. Such benefits could be conferred without loss, yet a wholesome restraint would be exercised. The recipient, conscious of the benefit of such protection, would, from motives, (first of policy,) regulate her own and her family's conduct to meet the lady's approval.

We know of many ladies who would willingly enrol some such family under their patronage, and find thereby a new interest in life, "but they don't know where to seek them." Yet there are more than a million of poor in London!

The outcry of all who are at work in the cause is unanimous—"We want visitors." "We want personal exertion." "We would rather have your help than your money."

Three Sundays since, a clergyman at the West-end of London gave out from his pulpit, "I have 12,000 souls in my parish, and I cannot get twelve district visitors from that number to aid my efforts among them."

Another testifies: "I have a population of 6000 people, amongst whom not even fifty families are in a position to keep even one servant, yet I can get no efficient district visitors."

Do not these facts speak for themselves of the inert state into which benevolence has fallen?

Now and then, the truth of this want strikes so vividly upon some thinking minds that efforts are made to meet the need, City missionaries, Scripture readers, and Bible women being appointed to aid the over-worked clergy. These, however good, are, nevertheless, but paid agents, and established more to provide for spiritual than temporal destitution. We want help from those with influence and means to plough up the fallow ground of hard poverty. We require them to prepare the way for religious impression by *substantial* deeds of kindness. We need to preface our tracts by example, and to lead the way to a loving Saviour by practical obedience to His command—"Love thy neighbour as thyself."

Last winter a step was made in the right direction. A band of gentlemen volunteers formed themselves into an association for the relief of distress, their object being personally to visit the poor and relieve deserving cases more in kind than money. They soon found the work they had engaged in was no sinecure, and were startled at the destitution they met with at every turn. Their experience agreed with that of other contemporary workers. The most deserving were overlooked, and the strongest and ablest were those who pushed forward and secured parish relief.* Wherever they

* In the relief given at the police courts last year, but comparatively few women received aid, being wanting in the physical strength required to push their way through the crowds of applicants, or to stand for hours waiting their turn to receive the weekly loaf.

forced their way, *women* were the principal sufferers. So convinced, however, were they that nothing but supervisional charity can diminish the increasing destitution around us, that they are more than ever anxious to extend their operations. A scheme has been therefore devised by one of the members of their society—the Rev. W. Mayd—viz., to map out London into districts; in each district, in connexion with the clergy, to establish a provisional or relief committee; and to organize their plan so that every street shall be under the supervision of district visitors. Such a system is precisely what is most needed to strike at the root of the evil. While it would curtail the rates, it would not keep those out of the union who by vice or idleness deserved to be treated as paupers, but it would discriminate between honest misfortune and wilful improvidence. By its administrative agency none need, however, become paupers because they were temporarily sick—none need become destitute outcasts, their homes laid bare and their landlord's key turned upon them, because of their employers failing to supply them with labour.

Such a society would at once be the test of industry and the patron of self-respect. Why cannot it, then, be established? Not from want of money—that is always forthcoming—but simply from the practical cause, that the labourers are wanting,—*volunteers for private exertion* are not to be found. Our rich population numbers hundreds of thousands, and the income of the metropolis, taking it at five times its rental, is estimated at £70,000,000. We have considerably more than a million of poor, and the parochial maintenance

levied for them amounts to £614,000,—not one-hundredth part of the income that represents our wealth. Compare this with the tenth set aside by the Levitical law for Church and poor.

Our night refuges receive during the year 20,000 homeless outcasts.

A small percentage of the number of those gifted with independence and leisure would be sufficient for the work of inquiry and supervision. What proportion at the present time are thus employed?

“Many hands make light work.” Would that we could impress this aphorism upon the public as regards its application to our poor. Our willing workers are over-worked: let any man or woman, actuated by Christian love, seek to relieve the burthen of the oppressed, even in his own circle, are they not instantly inundated with “cases?”—each neighbour being ready to slip the noose of personal exertion from his own shoulders, and leave the poor relations at his door.

Our London parishes swarm with poor, and our rich retire to the suburbs to clear themselves from the atmosphere of poverty. Do they leave their responsibilities behind them? Why cannot a staff among them be found to drive down as a matter of conscience once a week to visit the poor and link their efforts with whatever organization is deemed best?

Is any lady wishing to respond to the call, yet fearing an untrodden path, anxious to learn how best she can help?

She need not fear—her work will develop itself; but we would entreat her earnestly to endeavour first *to prevent our*

poor becoming paupers. Our own experience makes us urge this point, because we believe that if once this term, which the poor look on as a taint, be affixed to them, they rarely care to recover a position of independence. We have known respectable women often shut themselves up in bare walls, with honest pride and starvation as their companions, until work should again be met with, returning to it truly with diminished strength but an innate feeling of self-respect elevating them still; but we have rarely, if ever, seen them put off the union dress to work again with the same determination of self-support as before.

Take a few examples of how district visitors can prevent pauperism by intervention. How many widows, if looked for, will be found supporting themselves and their children by such talents as they are gifted with. Sickness, however, comes, and arrears of rent and debts are incurred by forced idleness. Weakened from her illness, the poor woman rises from her bed, and sees ruin before her. It is a moral impossibility she can retrieve past time, and yet provide for the future. Her children are crying around her for more bread than the parish out-relief fund will procure them. There is no friend to whom to apply to set her forward again—no district visitor to recognise her sinking position; therefore one by one her modest household goods, next her clothes, go to pay pressing claims. Wretched without the few comforts she has always before maintained around her, she at last, for her children's sake, succumbs to necessity, separates herself from them, and seeks the parish union. *Pauperized* by

misfortune, she never comes out, morally, what she went in; or if, perchance, she escapes contamination, how again can she start in that external decency of life which self-respect demands? Contrast what she and her children cost henceforth with the small sum that would have been at first needed to enable her to have maintained her industrial position. This preservation of station could have been procured for her alone by individual exertion.

Again, how many servant girls, especially in lodging-houses, &c., are unreasonably discharged from service without a character, with none to advise or demand for them justice from employers;—what is in nine out of ten cases the result? With strong temptation on one side, starvation on the other, their fate is almost a certainty. Then, hunted up from *the depths* by benevolent Christians, they are brought, blighted and sick, to our penitentiaries for protection. Individual exertion could have warded off their despair, and yet, oh! how many have reproached the rich with their misery. “No one cared for them when they *were honest*.”

Is there no need of encouragement and relief to those who are working themselves into consumption from a determination to be independent? Often have we sent poor isolated women to doctors for advice; the medical verdict they have returned has been this or a similar one: “She has not had food enough to support a dumb animal; we fear it is too late; but *give her generous diet*.” Generous diet, indeed. What a farce seems such a prescription unless she can be placed under provisional care.

To multiply facts, however, is not our object; visitors will not lack our aid to learn "where the shoe pinches and how to ease it." Ladies will probably be warned before they begin, as a damper to exertion, that intemperance is the cause of pauperism, and that no intervention will avail to reform its victims. We do not deny that intemperance is the last and great crowning cause, and the barrier to reform. We hold, however, that at least half its victims are led to seek its influence by the downward steps of neglect, sickness, incapacity, and forced idleness, and that at these various steps its progress may be continually arrested by prevention. Let this be attempted more than it has; let us seek to find employment for the willing, provide for the sick, teach the ignorant, and encourage the neglected; and we shall visibly diminish the number of self-destroying and self-destroyed victims to drink.

During a time of distress, in a sea-port town in Sussex, a large portion of the labouring classes were thrown out of employment. A benevolent lady, the late Mrs. Gilbert, of Eastbourne, devised the following practical scheme for their relief:—God had given her wealth, and she did not grudge it in the cause before her; but she recognised that money alone would never obviate the effects of idleness and its train of temptation and opportunities for evil. "We must make work for them," she said; so, instead of handing over her gold to others to distribute, she made it known among the sufferers that whoever would learn straw-plaiting should be taught, and receive one penny per yard for every piece they brought to her house. The current of industry thus excited soon

spread, and men, women, and children vied with each other in learning the art. Mrs. Gilbert's house was beset with straw-plaiters and straw plaits. She, however, kept her word, and paid the penny for every yard that was brought to her door. Many smiled at her zeal, and thought she was eccentric beyond measure, but it hindered her not. Her own judgment approved the course she had taken. Without her intervention there would doubtless have been exciting tales of destitution, thefts, and delinquencies. Nothing, however, of this kind occurred; and why? Simply because she had *prevented* it. There was no trumpet tongue of earthly praise to record the cases she had relieved; her motive and its result were known alone to God. Shortly afterwards Mrs. Gilbert died, the crisis of distress passed away, and the straw-plaiters returned to their usual occupations; but the good done had a deeper root than even the temporal relief of the hour. Knowledge gained, whatever it be, is a link in the chain of independence, and the straw-plaiters gained an art which in sickness or in age they could turn to account for daily bread. One result from this lady's forethought furnished a striking proof of the value of prevention. Among those who as a boy had joined the straw-plaiting community was a man employed on the railway at Eastbourne. This man lost both his legs from a fearful railway accident, and was brought home to his wife crippled for life. To use the woman's own words: the first day he was very dull, the second less so, and the third he said to her, "Mary, bring me some straw." It was brought to him, and after twisting it

about in his fingers for a time, he said, as if relieved from a weight of trouble, "I've got it!" and then he told her they need not fear now, for he could take up his old trade again for support. And he did so, and lived by it for years. The writer visited this man a few days since in his cottage; from straw-plaiting he has become so nimble with his fingers, that he now takes in work and can rival at his needle the finest workers in England. Verily, of good Mrs. Gilbert may be said, "Her works do follow her." Is not her example worthy of imitation? There are many and various ways whereby knowledge may be imparted to the poor besides that of straw-plaiting. How far more useful to spend a little money in materials to provide labour, even if we have no immediate use for the articles, than to give the same sum away in mere impulsive charity.

Another incalculable benefit would undoubtedly arise from a closer association between rich and poor—viz., the personal knowledge that the rich would acquire of the true value of time and labour.

A large portion of the underpaid labour which reduces wages to the minimum of starvation-point arises from the utter ignorance of ladies as to the value of the time required for execution of orders for work. Elaborate patterns are given to be copied, and the same price tendered for their execution as for the same garments simply made, though the time required to be spent over them be perhaps more than double. The same want of thought occurs with laundry and other work. An habitual contact with industry would open their eyes to the

prolonged efforts of labour, and increase the remuneration to more just hire. If the rich also were personally interested in their poorer neighbours, the ready-made shop articles would be less purchased, and the work oftener placed direct in the hands of the industrious.

Either of these supervisional benefits would help to stave off pauperism. As a proof that union relief is not palatable to the poor, few are found in summer, or when work is plentiful, to seek its shelter. Only as winter advances, and according to its *severity*, do we find the applications increase.

We have, we trust, given sufficient proof of the need there is that individuals should “Up, and be *doing*.” Work, albeit we recognise it not, is the portion of all. Idleness has no part in creation, and rest or pleasure to be enjoyed must be purchased by work. To depute to others our duties, or to ignore them, will never lighten their burthen. Our sins of commission, God knows, are great, but do not our sins of *omission* sometimes outweigh them? Works, we are aware, will never gain the crown which can be reached by faith alone; but works, though they have no life in themselves, are the scaffold to the building—a mean towards an end. Done in Christ and for Christ they have power, and *must* be performed, though not trusted in, else is our faith void. “I was hungry, and ye fed Me; thirsty, and *ye* gave Me drink; sick, and *ye* visited Me; in prison, and *ye* came to Me,” are words which our Saviour will address from His tribunal to active Christians. *Ye came*, not *ye sent*, are the characters inscribed.

There is no mention made of *deputy work* in that solemn judgment scene.

Friends, then, there is work for all. To our men of business, who have not the responsibility of leisure, let us leave the burthen of *giving work only*.

Let active work, sympathizing work, *preventing* work, and curing work, be no longer delegated to the few; but let "each strive to bear his own burthen, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

We have chosen this season to send forth this humble call to action, because Christmas is at hand, and we would fain see poor as well as rich rejoice in its advent.

There are thousands of respectable poor in our vast metropolis who, hidden from sight, will never come in for a share of the usual Christmas festivities, unless individual exertion seeks them out—thousands to whom Christmas will be but an empty name, bringing no joy, spiritual or temporal,—no hope either of happiness here or of the Redemption opened to them hereafter by our Saviour's birth. If we ourselves value that gift, let us seek personally to carry the good news into the dark and comfortless habitations of our London poor. Let us reflect the joy of our own hearts, not only upon those who accidentally come beneath our notice, but assist those who silently and patiently are suffering from oppression and want.

At Christmas time the heart is more than usually open to the calls of benevolence. Ocular demonstration will not diminish either the power or the will to *give*, but the sym-

pathy it leaves in its train will infuse new energy into many a despairing breast. "I thought there were no kind ladies left in the world," said a poor widow, with a burst of tears, when spoken kindly to. She had been ferreted out from a garret where she had hidden herself, and was trying to support three children by her unaided efforts at needlework. Illness had, however, just driven her to absolute despair, and she would have been classed among our pauper poor by this time had not timely relief been tendered her.

Ere the pen that has traced the foregoing lines is dry, the Christmas season of rejoicing, to which allusion was made, has been clouded in its birth; and in the sudden and early death of the Prince Consort England is called on to bear one of the greatest losses her people can sustain.

For twenty-one years Prince Albert has lived among us, honoured, admired, and beloved, setting an example of Christian steadfastness and manly virtue. His life was one of *action*, combining public utility with private benevolence. Raised to the highest position in the land, yet no man, perhaps, ever fulfilled life's various responsibilities and duties more practically or more unostentatiously.

While science and art engaged his attention, he yet devoted a large portion of his time and talents toward the social improvement of the people among whom he was placed. The movement for bettering the condition of the dwellings of the poor especially met with his sympathy and co-opera-

tion, and the model lodgings he erected are monuments of his practical interest in behalf of the labouring classes. The individual loss of such a man to the nation would be in itself a sufficient cause to banish for a time festivity from our homes and mirth from our hearts; but beyond this we have a deeper cause for sorrow, for in the life thus extinguished the domestic happiness of our beloved Queen was inseparably bound up. That Queen is now a *widow*, and *desolate*. Alas! what heart does not bleed for her anguish? Who can make merry while she is thus crushed under the first weight of her irreparable loss? Henceforth her sorrow must be her subjects', to share and alleviate as best they can. Even in the first hour of her bereavement, Queen Victoria found thoughts and words to express, that whatever her own burthen of grief might be, her people's prosperity was and should be still her acknowledged responsibility. Can we do nothing, then, at this crisis to aid so high and noble a resolve? Our individual sympathy cannot reach her directly, but surely we can prove its depth by lessening the misery of those whose grievances, when cognizant of, both the Queen and her late Royal Partner were ever the first to mourn over and alleviate.

Once more, then, through the press, we call on Christian friends not to spare their exertions to abate the increasing destitution of our land. The *Times* newspaper of December 10th, in a statement it makes, puts the increase of pauperism at about 6 per cent. over and above what it was in 1860. Can we not do something in 1862 to arrest its progress?

APPENDIX.

THE writer of the foregoing pages will thankfully accept any offer of "individual aid" towards the work which she is directing under the name of "The Needlewomen's Institute," 2, Hinde Street, Manchester Square, where any communications on the subject can be addressed.

The Society for the Relief of Distress, 38, King Street, St. James's, also authorize her to state, that any volunteers for district visiting, or personal work, among the poor of London, will be gratefully met. Relief will be afforded from their Society's funds to such cases of distress as their own district visitors certify to be deserving.





